

**Dear Visitors,**

Congratulations on your decision to choose Romania! We are certain that your company will find new business opportunities in Romania and we are here to help support that endeavor every step of the way!

First, we would like to provide you with some general information about Romania to ensure your stay is as enjoyable as possible.

**US Commercial Service** looks forward to seeing you in Bucharest shortly and wishes you safe travels.

**Welcome to Romania!**



*Pictures (first row) courtesy of: [www.romanianvoice.com](http://www.romanianvoice.com)*

## *Table of contents*

<b>Traveling to Romania, Bucharest.....</b>	<b>3</b>
Travel Formalities.....	3
Airport to downtown Bucharest .....	3
<b>Local currency, banking and credit cards in Bucharest .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Local Currency .....	4
Where to exchange money? What is the best payment method in Romania? .....	5
<b>Communications in Romania .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Standard time .....	6
Dialing to, in and out of Romania .....	6
Cell phones in Romania .....	6
Emergency Numbers.....	6
<b>Security in Romania .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Electricity in Romania.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Clothing in Romania.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Eating out in Romania.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Current Economic situation.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Romania in glance.....</b>	<b>9</b>
Location and history .....	9
Fast Facts .....	11

## Traveling to Romania, Bucharest

### Travel Formalities

US citizens are not required an entry visa for visiting Romania (up to 90 days). No taxes (entry or departure) are required to be paid. No vaccinations are necessary.

However, **do not forget**, you still need a valid passport!

Please check: [www.customs.ro](http://www.customs.ro) before you come to Romania. The legislation in force in Romania complies with the requirements of the European Union. Usually, the custom authorities do not check the traveler's luggage but they are entitled to perform everything from a luggage check to a full personal search. You will be required to show your passport as well as explain the reason you are traveling to Romania.

Also **pay attention** to your travel insurance! We strongly recommend you to include the medevac (medical evacuation) option in your insurance! Check with your insurance agent before you come to Romania!

### Airport to downtown Bucharest

You can find a taxi in front of the airport but make sure of the following:

1. The taxi belongs to one of the companies listed below;
2. Both registration number (written in black) and the company's name are displayed on the car;
3. The taxi driver has displayed in a visible place his identification card (name of the company, name of the taxi driver) with a photo attached;
4. Most of the Romanians have basic knowledge of English but you might consider writing down the address that you would like to go on a piece of paper and showing it to the driver;
5. The taxi driver must start the meter at the beginning of the drive.
6. Always, ask for a receipt at the end of your drive.
7. Look carefully at the price (see our recommendations in section 4 below) you are about to pay.
8. Tip should not exceed more than 10% of the price.

Recommended taxi companies:

Fly Taxi	Dial: 9441
Cobalcescu	9451
Cristaxi	9461
Grant	9433
Perozzi	9631
Prof Taxi	9422

**Pay attention** to the brand of the car! If the car is a foreign brand, it is likely that the cost will be higher.

If you wish to use public transport, there is an Express bus 783 found just outside the airport terminal. Buy a ticket at the RATB booth, for the equivalent of approximately \$0.80. The main stops for the bus are: Piata Presei Libere (main Publishing House), Piata Victoriei (Victoria Square), Piata Romana, Unirii.

**Do not forget** that in order to use either the taxi or the public transportation; you will first need to exchange dollars at the exchange offices in the airport. Do not exchange more than \$100 as the exchange rate is usually less favorable at the airport than it is downtown.

Please check the web site: <http://www.mycity.ro> which has an updated and detailed list of the most prominent Bucharest hotels.

## Local currency, banking and credit cards in Bucharest

### Local Currency

The local currency is:

1. Leu= ROL (plural Lei ) or
2. New Leu = RON (plural new Lei) - starting with July1st, 2005, Romania applied the de-nomination procedure and dropped four zeros.

However, **pay close attention**, as both old and new banknotes are still circulating and it can be confusing.

New banknotes have been issued in 500, 100, 50, 10, 5, 1 and coins in 1, 5, 10 and 50.

Below you'll find a table with the exchange rates between RON and ROL as well as photos of the current old and new banknotes.

If you get confused, **don't worry!** Romanians themselves still have problems figuring out the correct change. Take your time and do the calculations. Just remember that you have to add (new notes) or subtract (old notes) 4 zeros. Most hotels, stores, and restaurants still display the prices in both currencies (RON and ROL). Be sure to ask "Lay no?" which means In new lei? That is the note without all those pesky zeros!

ROL (Leu)	Equals	RON (new Leu)
5,000,000	=	500
1,000,000	=	100
500,000	=	50
100,000	=	10
50,000	=	5
10,000	=	1

ROL (Leu)

RON (new Leu)







### Where to exchange money? What is the best payment method in Romania?

Banks or authorized exchange offices (called: "casa de schimb" or "birou de schimb valutar") are the most recommended places to exchange money. Note that international airports and larger hotels also offer currency exchange services, but usually the exchange rate is less favorable.

**Never use** the black market no matter how promising it looks. It is illegal and you may be cheated.

The **average** exchange rate is \$1= 2, 85 RON/ 28,500 ROL.

All important restaurants, hotels, car rentals or stores accept major credit cards, such as VISA, MasterCard, and American Express. However, you may encounter situations where the credit card is not accepted (small restaurants or stores). You should seriously consider only using cash as credit card theft is a serious problem.

ATMs are available in all big cities. Be very selective about which ATM machines you use however. The ATM machines in 5 star hotels and banks are the most reliable. This situation changes when you go to small cities.

Traveler's checks are not recommended. They can be cashed in some banks or exchange offices but the commission fees are high.

## **Communications in Romania**

### **Standard time**

Standard time is East European time zone (GMT + 2 hours), 7 hours ahead of Washington, DC time.

### **Dialing to, in and out of Romania**

Most of the hotels and other places have international telephone lines installed.

### **Dialing from USA directly to Bucharest:**

International Access Code +40 (country code) + 21 + seven digit telephone number

### **Dialing from USA directly to any other city in Romania:**

International Access Code + 40 (country code) + three digit area code + six digit phone number

### **Dialing within Romania:**

(0 + three digit area code)<sup>1</sup> + six digit telephone number when dialing anywhere in the countryside or

(0 + 21)<sup>2</sup> + seven digit telephone number when dialing a number Bucharest.

### **International dialing from Romania:**

00 + country code + area code + telephone number

### **Cell phones in Romania**

Coverage and reception for cell phone in all cities are excellent. Check with your service provider about accessing the Romanian networks. (i.e. – Connex Vodafone, Orange).

### **Emergency Numbers**

Three digit telephone numbers are local toll-free numbers for emergencies or businesses.

**112 Emergency Call Center** – they will guide you to police, ambulance first aid, firemen, as needed

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<sup>1</sup> Mandatory in case of dialing from a cell phone;

<sup>2</sup> See above footnote.

### **Coordinates of the Embassy of the United States of America:**

Address: 7-9 Tudor Arghezi Str., Sector 1, Bucharest

Phone (duty hours): (00 40 21) 210 4042 *Duty hours are from 8am to 5 pm (local time).*

Phone (after hours): (00 40 21) 210 0149

### **Security in Romania**

In general, Romania is safe, including the city of Bucharest. However, street crime, particularly theft and pick pocketing, exists and you should always be alert and take sensible precautions.

**Do not encourage kids begging for money by giving them money as it often encourages child exploitation. Pay special attention to your pockets when gypsies surround you! Never show your passport and particularly your money, even if it is someone pretending to be a policeman. Report all thefts immediately to the police and notify American Citizens Services at the US Embassy during office hours and the American Duty Officer after hours.**

### **Electricity in Romania**

The electricity is 220 V in Romania.

Please **do not forget** to bring a plug and adaptor while traveling to Romania, otherwise your phones, laptops, hair dryers, electric razors will be useless! Adapters and plugs can be purchased at stores such as Radio Shack.

Romania utilizes the metric system for weights and measurements and temperatures. For conversion charts please go to: [http://hemsidor.torget.se/users/b/bohjohan/convert/conv\\_e.htm](http://hemsidor.torget.se/users/b/bohjohan/convert/conv_e.htm)

### **Clothing in Romania**

Weather was very unpredictable in Romania during the last years. We are experiencing climate change! Please **do not forget** to check this site before you come to Romania <http://weather.yahoo.com/regional/ROXX.html>!

### **Eating out in Romania**

In Romania, there is a wide range of choices of Romanian, Italian, Chinese, Indian, Lebanese and other international cuisine. Fast food restaurants are abundant, such as Pizza Hut, Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonalds. At your hotel please ask for the latest edition of *Sapte Seri* (Seven Evenings) [www.sapteseri.ro](http://www.sapteseri.ro) where you can find most of Bucharest's restaurants. If you are a wine drinker be sure to try Romanian wines as they are both very good and inexpensive (their variety and richness of taste will not disappoint you).

Try the following local specialties:

#### **Soup**

"Ciorba de perisoare" (meatball soup), "ciorba taraneasca" (vegetable soup, with or without meat), "ciorba de burta" (tripe soup).

## **Fish**

"Saramura" (grilled carp in brine), "nisetru la gratar" (grilled Black Sea sturgeon) or "scrumbie la gratar" (grilled herring).

## **Entrée**

"Tocanita" or "tochitura" (meat stew seasoned with onions and/ or spices), "ghiveci" (over 20 vegetables cooked in oil), "sarmale" (pickled cabbage leaves stuffed with a mix of minced meats, rice and spices) and "mititei" (The "Wee Ones" — small skinless grilled sausages) are among the favorites.

Romanians produce great pickled vegetables, called "*muraturi*" (red peppers, green tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots, red cabbage, cauliflower).

## **Dessert**

"Papanasi" (cottage cheese donuts, topped with sour cream and fruit preserve), "clatite cu branza" (crepes filled with cottage cheese, raisins and spices) and "cozonac" (traditional holiday sweet bread filled with walnuts, poppy seeds or cream cheese).

A traditional drink enjoyed with appetizers is "tuica" (a potent plum brandy) which varies in strength, dryness and bouquet according to the production area.

## **Buying from Romania?**

There are several handicraft shops in Bucharest downtown. Go to Magheru or Victoriei Avenue! Here are some of our recommendations:

## **Ceramics**

Romanian pottery is still made mainly on traditional kick-wheels with simple finishing tools. Shapes, sizes and patterns reflect the different clays and cultures of diverse areas where are produced. Color glazes and decorations vary from strong geometric, to delicate flowers, animals and humans.

## **Glass**

The oldest preserved Romanian glass dates back to the Roman Empire. Currently, there is a renewed passion for creating art in blown glass and several contemporary Romanian glass artists enjoy world renown.

## **Painted icons**

Of Byzantine influence, Romanian icons are sculpted in wood and are hand painted.

## **Current Economic situation**

Romania began the transition from Communism in 1989 with a largely obsolete industrial base and a pattern of output unsuited to the country's needs. The country emerged in 2000 from a punishing three-year recession thanks to strong demand in EU export markets. Despite the global slowdown in 2001-02, strong domestic activity in construction, agriculture, and consumption have kept growth above 4%. An IMF standby agreement, signed in 2001, has been accompanied by slow but palpable gains in privatization, deficit reduction, and the



curbing of inflation. The IMF Board approved Romania's completion of the standby agreement in October 2003, the first time Romania has successfully concluded an IMF agreement since the 1989 revolution. In July 2004, the executive board of the IMF approved a 24-month standby agreement for \$367 million. The Romanian authorities do not intend to draw on this agreement, however, viewing it simply as a precaution. Meanwhile, recent macroeconomic gains have done little to address Romania's widespread poverty, while corruption and red tape continue to handicap the business environment.

Romania appears to be right on track to become a member of the European Union on 1 January 2007. Negotiations on the accession chapters were completed on 14 December 2004. The country's Accession Treaty was signed on 25 April 2005. The way to the EU does not seem to be that easy though and there are still many domestic challenges to be met in order for Romania to become a member.

### Romania in glance



### Location and history

Romania is located in the southeastern part of Central Europe and shares her borders with Hungary to the northwest, Serbia and Montenegro to the southwest, Bulgaria to the south, the Black Sea and Ukraine to the southeast and to the north and the Republic of Moldova to the east.

Romania features splendid mountains, beautiful rolling hills, fertile plains and numerous rivers and lakes. The Carpathian Mountains traverse the center of the country bordered on both sides by foothills and the great plains region of the outer rim. Forests cover over one quarter of the country and the fauna is among the richest in Europe including bears, deer, and wolves. The legendary blue Danube River ends its eight-country journey through eight European countries at the Black Sea by forming one of the biggest and most interesting wetlands in the world, the Danube Delta.

Romania's history has not been as idyllically peaceful as its geography. Over the centuries, various migrating people invaded Romania. Romania's historical provinces Wallachia and Moldova offered furious resistance to the invading Ottoman Turks. Transylvania was successively under Hapsburg, Ottoman or Wallachian rule, while remaining an autonomous province.

Romania's post WWII history as a communist-block nation is more widely known, primarily due to the excesses of the former dictator Nicolae Ceausescu. In December 1989 a national uprising led to his overthrow. The 1991 Constitution established Romania as a republic with a multiparty system, market economy and individual rights of free speech, religion and private ownership.

One of the best-known figures of the Romanian history is Vlad Dracul (*Vlad, the Devil*) nicknamed Vlad Tepes (*Vlad the Impaler*) who was a ruler of Wallachia (1456-1462).



Vlad the Impaler (1431 - 1476)

Born in December 1436, he was the son of the governor of Transylvania, member of the Order of the Dragon, secret fraternal order that aimed to protect the Christians against the Turks. The Romanians associated the word dragon with the devil, so the little child became known as Vlad the Devil.

He grew up at the princely residence, as his father became the Prince of Wallachia, but his childhood was far from being happy. Both his father and elder brother were tortured and assassinated by the boyars of Tirgoviste.

But as the irony of the fate, Vlad the Devil became the Prince of Wallachia with the support of the Turks, support that was completely forgotten when he launched a campaign against them later on.

His name was prophetic as he proved to be cruel and controversial. He revenged his father and brother by impaling all boyars who were guilty of their deaths.

The method of impaling became his favorite and was applied to all prisoners either war prisoners or simple thieves. He became fearful and imposed both terror and order among his people. Being so confident in the effectiveness of order, Vlad placed a golden cup on display in the central square of Tirgoviste. The cup could be used by thirsty travelers, but had to remain on the square. According to the available historic sources, it was never stolen and remained entirely unmolested throughout Vlad's reign. Crime and corruption ceased; commerce and culture thrived, and many Romanians to this day view Vlad as a hero for his fierce insistence on honesty and order.

He managed to defeat the Turks, once his allies. Not having an army quite as huge as the Turks, he burned his own villages and poisoned the fountains' water. The Turkish army, thirsty and hungry, finally reached the capital of Wallachia where a horrible scene was witnessed: all Turkish captives were impaled in hundreds of stakes. They had no other solution but to retreat.

However, as cruel as Vlad the Devil was, his end was more than terrific. Betrayed by his younger brother, who was as well supported by the Turks, he was assassinated toward the end of December 1476.

### **Fast Facts**

**Official Name:** Romania

**Location:** Southeastern Europe

**Area:** 91,725 sq. miles



**Flag of Romania**

**Population:** 22,500,000

**Ethnic Groups:** Romanian 89%, Hungarian 7.5%, Gipsy 1.9%, German, Other 1.6%

**Religions:** Christian Orthodox 87%, Roman Catholic 5%, Protestant 5%, Jewish

**Official Language:** Romanian

**Capital:** Bucharest (Bucuresti)